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ROYAL COMMISSION

to Enquire into and Report upon the Causes  
and effects of the General Strike which  
recently existed in the City of Winnipeg  
for a period of six weeks including the  
methods of calling and carrying on such  
strike.

Report of H.A. Robson, K.C.  
Commissioner





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# ROYAL COMMISSION

TO ENQUIRE INTO AND REPORT UPON  
THE CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF THE  
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REPORT OF H. A. ROBSON, K.C.  
COMMISSIONER.

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To His Honour,  
The Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba.

By LETTERS PATENT, dated the Fourth of July, 1919, the undersigned was directed to enquire into and report upon the causes and effects of the General Strike which recently existed in the City of Winnipeg, for a period of six weeks, including the methods of calling and carrying on such Strike.

The undersigned accordingly after due notice publicly given commenced open sittings at the City of Winnipeg. Sittings were held on the following days: July 16th, 22nd, 23rd, 24th, 29th, 30th and 31st; August 1st; September 2nd, 8th and 10th. Numerous witnesses were examined. Independent enquiries were made.

The Commission was assisted by Mr. C. P. Wilson, K.C., and Mr. C. H. Locke.

Mr. T. J. Murray appeared on behalf of certain of the Labour interests. Various other Labour interests had representatives present, and certain persons appeared on their own behalf. Mr. J. Preudhomme at one stage watched the proceedings for the City of Winnipeg. Mr. W. J. Moran appeared on behalf of one of the employers concerned, namely, The Manitoba Bridge and Iron Works. No other of the employers affected appeared. The body known throughout the Strike as the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand which sprung up during the Strike did not appear on the proceedings, but filed a statement which is appended hereto.

TJ Murray

#### ORIGIN OF STRIKE

Herewith is a transcript of the evidence taken.

The outstanding fact of the General Strike is fresh in the minds of everyone and it is not necessary to lengthily recapitulate the circumstances.

For some weeks prior to the Strike there had been pending two disputes of importance between employees in the building trades and the builders and between metal workers in contract shops and the owners.

#### BUILDING TRADES DISPUTE

The building trades dispute centred on the question of wages. There were lengthy negotiations evidently amicably carried on. The evidence shows that the builders recognized that to provide a living throughout the year it was necessary that employees should have the rates requested by them or a reasonable approximation thereto, but their view was that the building cost would not stand these rates. There the matter stood and a strike was called.



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### METAL TRADES DISPUTE

The metal trades dispute affected the system of negotiation between the workers' unions and the owners. This was the question pertaining to what was known as Collective Bargaining. Workers insisted on recognition of and ultimate negotiation if necessary through the representatives of all of the men in all the contract shops in Winnipeg. The owners refused this on the ground that they themselves were not an association and would deal only each for himself with his own men in any collective capacity the latter might choose to adopt. This difficulty remained unsolved and a strike in these trades was likewise called.

### CONCILIATION EFFORTS

Earnest efforts were made by The Hon. T. C. Norris and Mayor C. F. Gray, of Winnipeg, to reconcile the parties in these cases. They presided over numerous conferences and used every effort to bring about satisfactory arrangements and terminate or prevent the specific trade strikes and the possibility of the widely extended trouble that actually took place.

### GENERAL STRIKE CALLED

The representatives of the immediate trades involved reported the situation to the Trades and Labour Council and appealed to that Council to ask all workers to support the two particular trades in their attitude. This the Council unanimously agreed to do and at a meeting held on May 13th it was found that a strike vote was overwhelmingly in favor of a general strike, and it was decided that the strike be put into effect on May 15th, at 11 o'clock a.m.

### SPECIFIC CAUSE OF GENERAL STRIKE

The specific and immediate cause of the general strike was the refusal by the employers in the Iron Contract shops to recognize the demands of the workers for agreement by those employers on the method of collective bargaining indicated by the Metal Trades Council on behalf of the employees. (The general concurrence of labor therein and the determination upon a general strike was due to the mood in which workers of all classes were at that particular time. Labour considered the refusal of the demand for collective bargaining as claimed by The Metal Trades Council to be a blow struck at Labour organization. The Strike was an attempt by direct action to secure the demand of labour. The general labour leadership in Winnipeg was dominant even to the extent of producing independent action by men whose union heads were elsewhere, in fact, international, and whose executives were not only not consulted at the beginning but their views in opposition to sympathetic strikes were ignored. The extent of the Strike exceeded expectations.

About seventy unions voted to strike. These covered all classes of

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\* Collective bargaining





labour in many divers walks, skilled and unskilled. Several groups of workers affected by the spirit that was abroad became organized during the Strike and joined therein. The strikers included those highly paid and those whose earning power was low. It included members of the fire brigade, the post office staff, the operators of the public utilities owned by the Government, the City, and private corporations. Those whose usual task was service in the provision of necessities of life joined therein. Newspaper and telegraph services were for a short time suspended. Very few branches of labour seemed to have escaped the general affection. It is reliably stated that 12,000 members of unions went out, and that they were accompanied by about 12,000 who were at the beginning of the Strike unorganized.

#### GENERAL DISCONTENT

The fact is that the minds of these striking workers (who may be classed by the general term "Labour"), that the mind of Labour—was in a state of discontent, that many of the active leaders of unions in and about Winnipeg perceived this condition and decided that it afforded a favourable opportunity to apply what has come to be known as **direct action** or **mass action** to bring the pressure of Government and the community upon the Metal Masters to concede the plan of collective bargaining demanded by the Metal Trades Unions.

The Unions supported this plan, but that does not wholly explain the cessation of work and disregard of obligation and consequences by the throngs of workers of all classes, organized and unorganized. Dissatisfaction at the conditions in which Labour found itself was a material element. This dissatisfaction and the grounds thereof are referred to later. But there were broader grounds. Minds had been intent on the War and the efforts therefor and that engrossing fact having ceased, the relaxation caused concentration upon the real or supposed wrongs at home such as are described in the evidence herein quoted. The employing class were thought to have been responsible for or to have unduly profited by those conditions. Labour generally acquiesced in the general strike as a protest and all who were not actually engaged in Labour were deemed to be blameworthy or to be at least legitimate subjects of that protest.

The general discontent among Labour has been very acute in and about Winnipeg. It has been fomented by the Socialist leaders hereafter referred to. The manifestation of this discontent may be by means of literature or by public utterance of more or less emphatic character, or it may take shape in the ordinary strike of a particular trade and possibly kindred trades, or becoming still more pronounced, take the extreme and unusual form of the general strike such as was witnessed here.



## CONDITIONS OF WAGE EARNERS

### WINNING'S STATEMENT

The conditions of certain branches of Labour in Winnipeg at the time of the Strike and to which he attributed the Strike was described by Mr. James Winning, who was, at the time of the Strike, President of the Trades and Labour Council. Mr. Winning made a concise but comprehensive statement at one of the hearings. At the risk of extending the length of this report, I think it will be highly valuable to quote at length from Mr. Winning's evidence. I have no doubt it gives a true and unexaggerated delineation of the mind of Labour in Winnipeg immediately prior to the Strike. I think these views should be given more permanent form than the passing newspaper reports which took place. Mr. Winning said:

A. "Labor was very much dissatisfied—dissatisfied with conditions as they existed. The cause of the dissatisfaction was, in my opinion—or at least one of the causes—was unemployment. Another cause was the high cost of living; lack of the Government to give adequate relief; long hours of employment, inadequate wages, undesirable working conditions, profiteering, the growing intelligence on the part of the working class of economic inequalities in modern society; the refusal on the part of some of the employers to recognize the right of the employee to organize labour; the refusal on the part of the employers to recognize the right of collective bargaining, and probably a great many other causes; those are some of the causes that I feel were directly the cause of the unrest which was prevalent before the strike took place in May.

"Now, if I may be permitted to say so, unemployment or the insecurity of a man's job is the greatest nightmare of the working class. When a man is out of a job he gets into debt. It means seeing his children running bare-footed when they ought to have shoes. It means if your wife is sick she can't get the necessary medicine and nourishment in order to build up her body; it very often means that you would get in a doctor if you were working, but if you are out of work you hesitate to do so, thereby endangering the lives of both your wife and family. It very often happens that this out-of-work problem finds you so far behind with your rent that the first thing you know is that the landlord is placing the bailiff in possession and you see your furniture going out, so I think I am correct in stating that the insecurity of the job—the question of unemployment is the greatest nightmare of the working class.

"The cost of living, as everybody knows, has been reaching the sky-lights this last four or five years, and the wages which the workers have been receiving from time to time have not been adequate to cope with this high cost of living, the result is, that when a man does get a job he is in debt and he has got to strain himself with those inadequate wages which he receives when he gets the job, to clear off that debt. The minimum wage board of the Province of Manitoba, after very careful investigation, considered that it took \$12 a week for an individual woman to maintain herself, support herself, and give her simply the bare necessities of subsistence. Now, if that be true, if it takes \$12 a week to give her the bare necessities of life, then I wondered when Mr. Boughton was sitting here yesterday, when he told us that he was working at the present time seven days a week, twelve hours per day, for \$20 a week, and he has to support five of a family on that. I wondered, if it was necessary that one person should have \$12 a week, how this particular case is going to get along; that is, seven days a week, twelve hours a day, and all for \$20 a week. I think Mr. Boughton gave a vivid description of what permeates in the minds of most workers today—they can't get sufficient wages for the high cost of living at the present time—that surely then is some cause for the workers to be dissatisfied.





"The worker today does not count so much upon his wages—upon the amount of his wages, as he does on the purchasing power of his wages, and he knows that what he could get for 25 or 30 cents in 1913, it costs him a dollar of those wages to get those same articles today.

"He has been further incensed by the reports that come out from time to time, the annual reports we see in the papers from some of the great industrial concerns of the country, showing the profits they have made during the last three or four years, in comparison with profits they have made prior to the War. The worker seeing these net profits accumulating by those industrial concerns, feels there is too much of the profits going to those employers; they feel that sufficient profits are being made to warrant them getting better wages, hence getting a better standard of living. They have felt that the Government of this country have been lax in their attitude of permitting this profiteering to go ahead. They have felt that the least the Government could do would be to nationalize all railroads, take over packing plants, abattoirs, elevators and public institutions of that kind. They are conversant with, and read from time to time what they are doing in other parts of the world, and they have seen that away in Queensland, Australia, the Government there has been able to cope with the high cost of living; they see that that Government has opened up State butcher shops, opened up municipal enterprises, nationalized public utilities, and thereby have been able to keep the cost of living down to a minimum. I think that by the Government not realizing those responsibilities or realizing those responsibilities and not acting on those responsibilities, in doing something of a tangible nature that would show to the workers they had done something to reduce the cost of living, that the worker has lost faith in the present Government. The workers don't forget such reports as come from the Davies case and such like; the workers remember those cases and they have seen from time to time commissions being opened by the Government into the high cost of living, commissions appointed to go into various things and they feel that the ultimate outcome has been that they have pigeon-holed their reports.

"Now I have stated that the wages of the workers at the present time are totally inadequate in most cases. I don't wish to go into details into the various trades and enumerate just what those wages are and what increases they have had—some of the speakers who follow me will elaborate on that, but I feel when I have been making investigations all over the City, my observations have been that in the various factories that men have been working for as low as \$15, yes, and as low as \$12, and they are expected to maintain a family on \$17, \$18 and \$20 a week throughout the City. I feel that that is the great cause—one of the greatest causes of the unrest that prevailed before the 15th of May. It is true that the worker is asked to work too long hours, that it impairs the health of the worker, and when a day of eight hours work is recognized the world over, it is not to be wondered at that men working 10, 12 and 14 hours a day should rebel against the long hours they are asked to work at the present time, and it is little wonder that they are dissatisfied with some of the working conditions that prevail. No doubt we have factory laws in the City of Winnipeg, but factory laws don't cover everything; there are certain working conditions that could be improved from time to time; there is not the slightest doubt that there is a great deal of dissatisfaction with the working conditions in certain industries in the City of Winnipeg.

"Now I feel that probably one of the great causes of unrest is the growing intelligence of the working class in general to the economic inequalities that exist today. I feel that the introduction of prohibition is improving the worker's condition from time to time; it is placing the worker in a better condition or position all the time; it is putting him in a more advantageous position to educate himself along economic and political lines, and I feel that the worker is taking a great advantage of those reforms at the present time. I believe there is a great desire on the part of the worker at the present time, not only for more wages, reduction of hours, and better working con-





ditions, but I feel there is a growing desire on the part of the worker that he should participate further in industry, that he should be a co-partner in industry; I feel there is a growing desire on the part of the organized labour movement of the world that the worker should be recognized in the conducting of that industry, and they feel that they have something more at stake, they feel they deserve something more than simply the opportunity to work for so much wages. They feel that their whole life, their energy and labour power is invested in that industry, and that while the employer may invest his capital that they also invest their life, and without that labour power it would be impossible to produce wealth, and realizing more and more the importance of his labour power, the great necessity for that labour power, he feels that he should be taken more into the confidence of the employer and be given a greater part in the conducting of the affairs of the great industry enterprises today. In these times when we read that employers of labour, governments of nations, are recognizing the right of the workers to organize, are recognizing the right of the worker to the principle of collective bargaining, we wonder why it is that such industrial eruption could take place because of the fact that some employers refuse to recognize those principles.

"I don't think it is necessary for me this morning to go into any argument as to the right of the worker to organize; it is sufficient at this time for me to say that the refusal on the part of the employers of labour today—and I want to tell the Commission there are not simply a few—my observations are that there are very many in the City of Winnipeg, has been incensing the worker during the last six months, and what we want is a closer co-operation between capital and labor; whilst it can be talked of, and advertised and so on, that is of no value to Labour unless it is practised in the factory and the mill, and the worker feels that just so long as the employers of labour can discuss a closer co-operation in their associations and ignore it in the factory, they then become suspicious of that employer, and that suspicion is going to remain, so that I feel that with a closer co-operation, with a better understanding what demands of labour are, a better understanding on both sides, that something can be accomplished to eliminating to a great degree the very thing we have just passed through, such an industrial eruption.

"I don't hope that we will ever be free from strikes, but I do say this, that there are a great many things in each strike which can be brought down to a minimum. I feel, Mr. Commissioner, that those are some of the causes simply that existed and which was the chief cause of the unrest prior to the general strike being called in May.

Q. "You say, Mr. Winning, that that condition of unrest prevailed in Winnipeg prior to the first of May?"

A. "Yes."

Q. "How was it evidenced; are you speaking now of what members of the labour movement told you, or are you speaking from what you saw?"

A. "Well, I have both seen and have been in conversation with men in all walks of life, in all vocations and had discussions in various lodge meetings, and various other union meetings of different industries; I have had a good opportunity of having the expressions of opinions from these men."

Q. "Do you connect in any way the conditions which you have outlined and the general strike which took place?"

A. "The only way that I can connect it is this: that I never knew at any other time in my life that conditions existed that made it so easy for a successful strike vote to be taken. Everybody seemed to be dissatisfied in their particular lines, there seemed to be causes existing, if it was not the case of the high cost of living, or wages, it was some other cause. It was because of the fact that certain employers had refused to recognise the right to organize, or probably because of long hours of employment."

Q. "What you say is, that every man had his grievance?"



A. "He had his own particular grievance; there are so many factors, so many different causes, that to enumerate them it would be quite a lengthy list."

Q. "Do you think that the conditions prevailing among labor this year were worse or better than the conditions prevailing at any time during the year 1918?"

A. "Let me state this. That conditions have been gradually getting worse during this last four years. I came to my conclusions this way, that the amount of applications coming into the Labour Temple, the amount of visits we have had from every industry in this city, from men working in industries in the city, laying their grievances before us, and asking us to do something for them, that their wages were so helplessly low that they were not able to buy something with their wages as they did five or six years ago, and I have worked myself night and day organizing those fellows into organizations. I am sure there must be thousands more added to the organized labour movement in the middle of April than there have been during the last fifteen years, and with all those various industries getting into an organized labour movement, with all those industries clamoring for recognition, clamoring for better conditions, clamoring for relief, it expressed itself when the Trades and Labour Council asked it to take a strike vote."

Q. "There was a large degree of activity in the matter of labor organization work this spring?"

A. "Yes, we could not cope with it."

Q. "Did that activity come about as a consequence of any decision of the Trades and Labour Council campaign or did it come about from requests from sections of labour?"

A. "I don't know that the Trades and Labour Council ever went on record to inaugurate a campaign. There was no necessity for that, the amount of applications that were coming in, and the visits that were made, the amount of inquiries that were made, would have easily kept four or five organizers on the road, and we simply had to work night and day to cope with it."

Q. "So far as the Council was concerned, it was simply a question of handling the business as it came and the applications that the organization received?"

A. "Yes."

Q. "So that you say, then, that this condition reflected itself in the strike vote that was taken in the early part of May?"

A. "That is so."

This statement was openly and publicly given. It was reported with accuracy in the public press. Although the most ample opportunity was given therefor, no one sought to challenge this evidence. So much for the mind of labour at this time. But there were other influences at work, and it is necessary to refer to them and return later to consideration of Mr. Winning's statement.

#### AGGRESSIVE SOCIALISM

There has for a long time past existed in Winnipeg an element which strongly advocated socialistic views. The group of men who have forced themselves to the front in that way directed their energies towards the conversion of their ideas of the working classes of Winnipeg. They were particularly successful with the foreign element and, since the revolutions in Europe gave point to socialistic propaganda, Europeans of the Russian and Austrian type in this country were most willing disciples of these leaders. The Russian revolutions were represented as indicative of the





realization of a bright day for the workers and the accomplishment at last of the predominance of Labour over Capital. The idea also made some headway among original British subjects, but the matter should be treated as though it was purely the work of pronounced Socialistic agitators, and that their chief following was the Russian and Austrian, who thought he was merely following the steps of his European brother. There had been open declarations of these people in Winnipeg, particularly in January this year. The Socialistic leaders were not in the true sense labour leaders. It was unfortunate that, from different causes, genuine labour was given the appearance of being linked up with the movements of these men. The ordinary trades union labour leader found himself on the same committee as the extreme socialistic leader and naturally there was a general conclusion that the principles of all were the same. At the Convention held at Calgary in March, ostensibly by Western Labour, the most revolutionary doctrines were advocated. These were constantly promulgated and advocated by these socialist leaders before and during the Strike. These leaders made the utmost use of the Strike to advance their plans. They attempted to convert the Strike into a practical socialistic movement and to thrust themselves into its leadership. It is not hard to understand how the foreign element in the workers followed this leadership immediately when the Strike was declared, but it is impossible to believe that the great mass of workers, intelligent and loyal to British institutions, and who accepted the existing order of things, no matter how discontented they were, acquiesced in all that was said and done. It was clear to them that the motive of the radicals was not that of obtaining the right to a mode of collective bargaining for a group of workers, but that the purpose was to elevate Labour into a state of dictatorship. The undersigned cannot think that these workers of British and Canadian origin ever intended to go to that extent. The strikers included men of education whose very occupation assumed high intelligence and fidelity. The great majority of them were brought up in accordance with and reliance upon British and Canadian institutions. It is impossible to assume that such would ever endorse the course which would lead to the Russian condition. The great mass, however, was so unsettled due to relaxation of the war tension or the difficult conditions of the times that they readily responded to the call to strike. It was, in the minds of many, a protest against conditions and a demand for general relief. The issue of collective bargaining as claimed appeared one of great moment to labouring classes and their sympathies were evoked to the fullest extent. The mental condition was such that a matter, which would not in ordinary times be thought to justify a sympathetic strike was quite sufficient on the occasion in question. There is the further explanation which is deeply rooted, namely, that a great many of the workers who struck could not resist the force of the strike and either struck or remained out because of intimidation which was not by merely strong persuasion or exhortation, but was of a threaten-

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ing character. This was evident from the fact that labour which was released for necessary purposes had to be protected, for instance, by signs on wagons that it was permitted by the Strike Committee.

### PRO-STRIKE PUBLICATIONS

The official publication of the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council, known as the "Western Labour News," a weekly newspaper, had in August, 1918, succeeded a paper known as "The Voice," formerly published by a private company in the interests of labour.

The new paper almost from its inception up to the date of the General Strike bears the ear-marks of a frankly socialistic publication rather than that of an advocate of Trade Unionism and its principles. "The Voice" had been representative of the conservative mind in Labour. The new paper rapidly gave evidence of its devotion to the radical wing of the labour movement. The "Western Labour News" featured very largely socialist articles and other propaganda, and the trend of its editorials was entirely socialistic.

A perusal of the files of this paper from the date of its first issue until the day upon which the General Strike was called, leads the undersigned to conclude that it played a large part in fanning the discontent of the working class, and bringing this discontent to such a pitch, that as a class, the working people of Winnipeg were in an extremely receptive mood when the proposal of the General Strike was brought before them.

Mention must here be made of the part this publication played in the advocacy of the organization known as the "One Big Union." The One Big Union as a movement appears to have had its start in Australia. In the issue of the "Western Labour News" of January 3, 1919, prominence is given to a report of the congress of the Victoria (Australia) Unions. This congress had declared for the One Big Union principle as opposed to a continuance of craft unionism. This article mentions in particular the enthusiasm with which the One Big Union victory in Victoria was hailed by the revolutionary socialistic party and by men formerly prominent in Australia in a movement known as The Industrial Workers of the World. Up until the date of the Labour Convention in Calgary in March, the paper continued in this vein. Articles by such revolutionaries as Nicholas Lenine were printed, together with long articles by other socialistic writers, depicting pretended benefits derived by the working class in Russia by the triumph of the Bolshevik movement.

The proceedings of the Calgary Convention were lengthy and a long report was published in the issue of the paper on March 21st. A complete copy of the proceedings was published as a supplement to the "Western Labour News," and was widely circulated all over Western Canada among labouring people. It was at this Convention that the decision was reached to take a vote of Union Labour in Western Canada upon the question of severing the affiliation of the various craft unions from their Internationals



and forming all classes of workers into one big union, that is, craft unionism was to be displaced by industrial unionism. It was also decided to take a poll of organized labour in Western Canada upon the question of a six-hour day and a five-day week, to go into effect on July 1st, 1919. If the vote had been favourable, the proposal was to call a General Strike to enforce this demand. From March onward, the "Western Labour News" enthusiastically advocated the one big union movement.

On April 18th, the "Western Labour News" printed on its front page the form of organization of the One Big Union adopted by the Queensland (Australia) Trade Union Congress, and this was followed on April 25th by the printing on the front page of the paper of the plan of the Russian Soviet system, printed, so the paper alleged, from the only blue print form extant on the American Continent. In this same issue in a prominent position on the front page, workers were exhorted as follows: "Workers, awake! Cut out and hold this plan for One Big Union." (The plan referred to is the Russian Soviet system plan last referred to.) Articles along this line continued up until the date of the General Strike, when the "Western Labour News" (weekly) was replaced for the time being by the "Strike Bulletin," published daily by the General Strike Committee, edited by the editor of the "Western Labour News."

The aim of the One Big Union movement as stated in the editorial column of the "Western Labour News" in its issue of May 16th, which was the last issue before the temporary suspension referred to, was stated as follows: "The aim of this movement is the securing of the control of industry by all who work through industrial organization. Nothing short of the ultimate elimination of the profit system will satisfy Labour."

It may be stated generally as a result of a perusal of the columns of the "Western Labour News" from its inception in August, 1918, to May 16, 1919, that its character throughout was toward radical socialism rather than craft unionism. It lays stress upon the necessity of the workers developing class consciousness, and was intended to antagonize working people along class lines as against the so-called capitalist section of the community. This paper, like other publications of similar socialist tendencies, apparently recognizes only two classes in the community—the employer and those who work with their hands. Possible interests or rights of vast numbers of the community who do not fall within either classification are not considered. The circulation of this newspaper undoubtedly had a large part in stirring up discontent and bringing it to a head.

It was apparent from the views expressed in the "Strike Bulletin" that the publication was in the hands of the same or similarly minded radical spirits as had directed the policy of the "Western Labour News" since the preceding August. During the first five days of the Strike, when its paralyzing effect upon the community at large was most apparent,



various articles in this paper indicated that in the minds at least of the persons responsible for these articles, the Strike was something more than an endeavour to obtain a concession of a particular method of collective bargaining from the Metal Trade employers. This was quite in line with the policy so persistently advocated in the "Western Labour News" during the preceding months. The expression of such views eventually, however, disappeared from the "Strike Bulletin" as the Strike progressed, and as the community, having become organized, took steps in the way of organization to counter the paralysis brought about by the general Strike in rendering the ultimate outcome of the Strike as at least uncertain from Labour's point of view. The policy publicly advocated in the "Strike Bulletin" as the one which would ensure success for the workers was to do nothing and to refrain from any acts of violence. Unfortunately this advice was not universally followed. At the same time, the paper accentuated daily the class nature of the struggle. No distinction was made between the actual employers with whom the real dispute was and the great mass of the community who were not employers in any sense of any of the men on Strike.

#### THE PROSECUTIONS

The undersigned is aware that there are now pending certain prosecutions in which facts connected with the general Strike will be involved. It was at one time thought that the question of the cause of the Strike and the issues in the prosecutions were the same and, therefore, that the Commission could not report until the prosecutions had terminated and the facts there elicited could be made a basis, in part at least, of this report. Whether or not, the facts in question will be elements in the prosecution seems to the undersigned not to affect or necessitate any further delay in this report, as the undersigned finds that the general widespread Strike was the result of the determination to support by mass action the demand for the type of collective bargaining in question. The condition described by Winning and the general unrest above set forth were contributory. Certain leaders no doubt perceived this condition, but it is too much for me to say that the vast number of intelligent residents who went on Strike were seditious or that they were either dull enough or weak enough to allow themselves to be led by seditionaries. The men referred to may have dangerously inflamed certain minds, but the cause of the Strike, or of the exercise of mass action, was the specific grievance above referred to and the dissatisfied and unsettled condition of Labour at and long before the beginning of the Strike. It is to be clearly understood that the undersigned refrains from expressing any opinion upon the question of the guilt or innocence of the individuals now committed for trial at the forthcoming assizes upon charges of seditious conspiracy. It is with the motives and intent of the general body of Labour that this report deals.





### METHOD OF CALLING AND CONDUCTING THE STRIKE

The Commission requires that a report be made upon the method of calling and conducting the Strike.

It was frankly acknowledged by Mr. E. Robinson, Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council, that the method of taking the Strike vote was not in accordance with the constitutions of the various lodges. The constitutional method was that each lodge should take a separate vote by ballot and that the actions of the members of that lodge would be guided by the result of that vote. A form of ballot was generally distributed. To show the magnitude of that movement it may be noted that 17,000 ballots were printed. The form of ballot contains the statement that all ballots would be pooled and a majority would prevail. A majority of all would mean a separate majority of each lodge. Without surmising as to what the effect would or might have been if the vote had been taken in the constitutional manner, it is sufficient to say that there might well have been quite a different result. As the matter was, unions simply acquiesced in the mass action movement which had commenced and which was led by forceful men. There were at the start of the Strike proceedings seventy unions involved, all affiliated with the Trades and Labour Council, Winnipeg.

An investigation was made by counsel for the Commission of the methods employed in eighteen of the striking unions in taking their Strike vote, and a written report of the result of such investigation filed.

It appears that the Trades and Labour Council on May 6, passed a resolution that a vote should be taken in the unions affiliated with that body which were not already involved in the Building Trades and Metal Trades strikes, upon the question of calling a General Strike in support of the striking Building and Metal Trades Workers. The ballots were printed at the instance of the Trades and Labour Council, by whom the form of the ballot was decided and from this source distributed to the various unions in order that each might take a vote of its members.

The methods adopted by the individual unions in taking the vote varied. In ten of the eighteen which were investigated meetings were called, the ballots given out, marked and then collected in the meeting by members delegated for the purpose. Ballot boxes were not used, nor was the ballot in any sense a secret ballot in the general acceptance of that term. In the other eight unions investigated, the ballots were given out and collected in the shops or places in which the members were at work. A return was made in each case to the Secretary of the Trades and Labour Council, either by reporting, in writing, the result of the vote, or by sending to the Secretary the marked ballots to be counted by him. In no one of these eighteen unions was any written record available showing the result of the vote in the various unions. The marked ballots had been destroyed at the Labour Temple prior to the time this Commission com-



menced its sittings, so that no means were available at the time the investigation was made by counsel of checking with certainty the correctness of the statement of the result of the vote made public in the official organ of the Trades and Labour Council. In the absence of any such certain means of obtaining this information, resort could only be had to questioning various members and officers of these unions who were cognizant of the facts. Some of these questioned were men who had themselves strongly opposed the General Strike; yet even these stated that the large majority had voted in favour of such strike and the figures obtained from these sources substantially agreed with the report made public.

In certain of these eighteen unions, it was found that simultaneously with the taking of the vote upon the question of the General Strike, a second ballot, which may for convenience be called the "One Big Union" ballot was voted upon. This was in the form following:—

ONE BIG UNION  
MANITOBA PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE  
OFFICIAL BALLOTS

BALLOTS TO BE RETURNED TO ROOM 1, LABOUR TEMPLE,  
WINNIPEG, ON OR BEFORE MAY 20, 1919.  
REFERENDUM ON SIX-HOUR DAY

At the inter-Provincial Labour Convention held recently at Calgary a resolution was carried without opposition, asking that a referendum be taken of the members upon the establishment of a "SIX-HOUR WORKING DAY," five day week, to go into effect July 1st.

REFERENDUM ON INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION

At the recent Inter-Provincial Labour Conference, held in Calgary, consisting of 250 delegates, representing the Trade Union movement from Port Arthur, Ont., to Victoria, B.C., the following resolution was carried without one opposing vote:

"RESOLVED, that this Convention recommend to organized labour in this Dominion the severance of the present affiliation with the international organizations, and that steps be taken to form an industrial organization of all workers."

This was introduced by the chairman of the resolutions committee as a substitute for the many resolutions presented to the conference by delegates from various parts of the West, acting under instructions from their local organizations.

A policy committee was elected and brought in a report which was adopted. The substance of it is as follows:

1. Name of proposed organization to be "The One Big Union."
2. Central Committee of five to supervise propaganda and take referendum.
3. Provincial Committee to handle affairs of each Province.
4. In establishing new organizations, Central Executive to work through existing District Boards and Trades and Labour Councils.
5. After the vote is received a conference of Representatives of Trades Councils and District Boards will be held to draw up a plan of organization.





ARE YOU IN FAVOUR OF A GENERAL STRIKE TO ESTABLISH A  
SIX-HOUR WORKING DAY?

FOR

AGAINST

If in favour mark X after "FOR " If opposed mark X after "AGAINST."

ARE YOU IN FAVOUR OF SEVERING YOUR AFFILIATION WITH  
YOUR PRESENT INTERNATIONAL CRAFT UNION AND BECOMING  
PART OF ONE BIG INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION OF ALL WORKERS?

FOR

AGAINST

If in favour mark X after "FOR." If opposed mark X after "AGAINST."

### INTERNATIONAL UNIONS

There were attempts made, and to some extent successful, to bring out the men from unions not affiliated with the Trades and Labour Council. These unions included lodges of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen.

There must be distinguished the order known as "The Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees," which does not include any of the above and which is affiliated with the Trades and Labour Council of Winnipeg.

The lodges referred to above are integral parts of International Unions. Their movements in important steps are under the guidance of the International Officers. One of their principles is that there shall be no sympathetic strikes by their unions. The determination to strike must also be subject to the approval or direction of the International. In this instance considerable numbers of the men involved in the lodges above referred to met (not in formal meeting) and decided upon the taking of a ballot on the question of their men at various points joining in the General Strike in support of Labour at Winnipeg. There was circulated a form of ballot which would lead men to suppose that the taking of the ballot was in fact a union proceeding. Apparently this attempt resulted in men going out in considerable numbers. When the International officers heard of this they came on the ground, held trials and expelled men who had departed from the laws and principles of the respective unions.

The effect of this expulsion was serious for the men affected as the employer company, in these large railroad instances, takes eligibility of its men in large measure from their Union status. Certain leaders in this unauthorized strike of International Union members were still out of work at the time of the hearing, others had been re-employed as an act of grace on the intercession of the Union after the period of suspension had elapsed and before it in certain cases.

With further reference to the mode of calling the Strike, it has already been mentioned that immediately thereafter a number of new Unions



were organized and called out on strike and that unorganized labour largely joined in the movement.

### CONDUCT OF STRIKE

On the question of the method of conducting the Strike, very little need be said. The relentless determination of labour is evident from the facts already recited. The Union leaders suited the action to the word and even those who were not making use of revolutionary language, were nevertheless persistent in their drastic methods and regardless of the consequences of a complete cessation of labour in every avenue of life. Evidently it was of no consequence to them that there might be great suffering from want of medical aid or want of food and milk deliveries or in many other ways. That there was in fact loss of life, other than that caused by riots, cannot be doubted. Labour leaders frankly say that even this had to be suffered, if necessary, to bring the community to a realization of labour's predicament, and that the damage that would result from the general strike was slight compared with the ordinary sufferings of labour.

The direction of the Strike was in the hands of a **Central Strike Committee** of fifteen elected by a larger **General Strike Committee** consisting of three delegates from each affiliated union, which latter body exercised supervision over the activities of the smaller body.

At the opening of the Strike there was a general attempt to close down business even beyond the almost extreme extent brought about by suspension of work by the large and comprehensive body of employees above enumerated. Groups of persons assuming authority from the Strike Committee made demands on owners of certain businesses (whether they employed labour or not) to close down and cease rendering service to the public, but even in the face of the spirit of intimidation which existed the independence of the owners prevailed and very little was accomplished by strikers in this way. There were, as is usual in such circumstances, assaults made in various parts of the city by individual strikers or their sympathizers upon drivers of delivery wagons and other vehicles owned by merchants who persisted in carrying on their businesses, and, while most of the extensive picketing resorted to was restricted to persuasion, there were cases of threats being made and physical violence done to those employees who endeavoured to carry on their work in the face of the almost universal cessation.

It should be said that the leaders who had brought about the General Strike were not responsible for the parades or riots which took place, and, in fact, tried to prevent them. The leaders' policy was peaceful idleness, but turbulent persons affected by this extraordinary condition broke loose and were responsible for the street demonstrations and violence that took place during the Strike.



### EFFECTS OF THE STRIKE

The Commission directs an enquiry into the effects of the Strike. The main question is that of the cause of the Strike, so that its recurrence may be prevented. The effects or consequences of the Strike were serious enough. They were a warning to all classes that in all interests the repetition of such a calamity should, if at all humanly possible, be prevented.

There was probably in mind in preparing the Commission the economic loss to the community which resulted from six weeks idleness of so many workers, many of whose occupations were of productive and constructive character. Hereinbefore have been enumerated the various types of workers who ceased work. Little more than a glance at that is required to indicate the loss to the workers themselves and to the community from their idleness. The wealth of the city and province suffered accordingly. This was at a time when it was of greatest importance that production and development should proceed at the highest possible speed.

### GENERAL LOSS TO COMMUNITY

With a view to ascertaining the nature and extent of the loss to the community, a questionnaire was prepared and submitted to all the larger industries and businesses in Winnipeg. The answers received show that the loss occasioned by the Strike was universal. Practically every class of business being carried on in Winnipeg suffered. The aggregate amount of the direct monetary loss, as estimated by the answers to the questionnaires was enormous, while the loss suffered and which will be suffered hereafter by reason of outside business being diverted from Winnipeg, is impossible to estimate. In a very large number of cases there was a complete cessation of business, though the larger proportion of industries were able to continue to operate at least partially. Large sums in the aggregate were expended in all classes of business and industry for insurance against anticipated damage from rioting and disorder. To the professional classes, the loss was hardly less serious, very large numbers of this class of the community abandoning their occupations for the purpose of co-operating in movements to maintain and preserve community life and good order during the Strike. Every class of business, industrial or professional life, suffered through deprivation of correspondence facilities, either through the ordinary channel of the mails or by telegraph service, the strike of the postal employees and telegraph employees in the earlier days of the strike completely shutting off the usual avenues of communication.

In addition to the individual losses of all classes of the community, the corporation of the City of Winnipeg were put to large and extraordinary expenses in the maintenance of law and order and in the endeavour to carry on public utilities. As a single instance of this, the expenditure for the special police force, which was enrolled by the City, approximated \$210,000.00, a direct loss to the community at large.





The ruinous loss occasioned to the striking employees themselves requires no examination in detail. While the number of men actually on strike varied from time to time, and diminished largely during the last ten days of the strike, there can be no doubt that approximately 20,000 workers in the City of Winnipeg lost their entire revenue for a period of six weeks.

The General Strike undoubtedly prolonged the strike in the Building and Metal Trades, and the loss of wages to the workers in these industries was even greater, lasting from May 1st to the end of June. Particularly in the Building Trades this wage loss to the men on strike was most serious, coming at a time when work was freely available to these men who, owing to climatic conditions, can on the average only obtain seven months' work out of the twelve.

#### BUILDING OPERATIONS, PARTICULARLY DWELLINGS, RETARDED

The undersigned directed an investigation to be made as to the effect of the prolongation of the Building Trades Strike upon building operations, particularly on the erection of dwellings. This was considered of especial importance, having regard to the anticipated shortage of housing accommodation during the coming winter. This anticipation has been only too fully realized, the present shortage being acute. Counsel made such an investigation and a report was filed of the result of such inquiry. Of necessity it was not possible to arrive at an exact figure as to the number of dwellings, the building of which was abandoned by reason of the strike. Clear evidence was, however, obtained, showing that the building of at least 150 dwelling houses which, but for the prolonged building trades strike, would have been available for occupation this autumn, was entirely abandoned for this year. In addition to the effect on housing accommodation, other building was either retarded or abandoned. Evidence was obtained of one instance where all arrangements were complete for the erection of an office building in the down town district at a cost estimated in excess of \$500,000.00, by American capital. Not only was the building not commenced, but the capital was withdrawn and invested elsewhere than in Winnipeg.

To questionnaires 602 answers were received, and these disclosed damage universally suffered.

The question as to the volume of loss through diversion of business from Winnipeg appears to be incapable of anything more than a rough approximation, and in many classes of business was regarded as being quite impossible to estimate.

The answers further show the heavy expenditure incurred in the extra-



ordinary item of insurance against anticipated loss from rioting and disorder.

It was recognized that it would be impracticable to attempt to obtain figures of individual losses under circumstances where loss touched practically every member of the community.

The farming community round about likewise felt the disturbance by the closing of their market at the very time of the year that it is usually most active. By reason of strikes of freight handlers and clerks, cartage employees and express men, goods were not handled in Winnipeg in the ordinary methods of transportation. The Strike of these employees extended beyond the environs of Winnipeg.

### STRIKE IN EXPRESS COMPANIES

The employees of the Dominion Express Company and the Canadian Northern Express Company struck. All employees in the offices and the express messengers running in and out of Winnipeg ceased work, the number of men affected in the Dominion Express being 205, and in the Canadian Northern Express 129, resulting in the business of these two companies being completely suspended. Strikes in these two cases resulted in tying up the Express Service in practically all of Western Canada at a time of year when their volume of business in the transportation of cream, butter, eggs and repairs for agricultural implements is at the greatest. The Canadian Northern Express Company during the months of May and June handle on an average about 400 cans of cream a day and approximately 1,200 dozen of eggs. This was completely cut off. It is impossible to accurately estimate the monetary loss occasioned by the lack of express service to the farming community in Western Canada.

The strike in Winnipeg of the Dominion Express employees was followed within two weeks by strikes of a majority of their employees at Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, the workers in these latter places being called out in sympathy with the strike in Winnipeg. Large quantities of food which had been entrusted to these companies for shipment immediately prior to the commencement of the strike, were spoiled, while the loss to merchants in Western Canada, who were receiving produce for shipment, and who were unable by this particular strike to transport these commodities to market, was very large.

The various ways in which this cessation of work embarrassed the farming and country communities were so manifold that they cannot be recounted in detail. It is not difficult for anyone to immediately realize in some way the far reaching effects the interruption of freight transportation alone would have upon the communities referred to.

It is impossible to estimate with any approach to accuracy the financial

1

loss to wage earners, the financial loss due to want of production in and about Winnipeg during the period in question, and the deflection of business from Winnipeg or the loss to the agricultural and dairying communities.

One of the consequences of the Strike was that provision had to be made for carrying on the necessary public services in and about Winnipeg and for the providing of the homes with the necessities of life. The public services included the important branch known as the Fire Brigade. The employees in the City Water Department had carried down the pressure of the water supply to thirty pounds, which was not more than enough to reach the first storey buildings.

#### VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONS BY CITIZENS

Hereinbefore there has been enumerated the various occupations in which there was a cessation of work. By reference to them it will be seen that a great variety of emergency services had to be provided. This necessitated organized effort on the part of the general citizenship. A very strong committee was formed for the purpose, and the result was a most spontaneous and unanimous effort on the part of the citizens to supply the want caused by the sudden idleness of all the branches of labor already referred to. The organization was headed by a Committee known as The Citizens' Committee of One Thousand, but the general rally to meet the needs of the community extended even beyond the formal organization and indicated a spirit of sacrifice and self-denial on the part of a great number of citizens. It might be here said that it was the thoroughness of the Strike that created such a reaction against it. Original causes were lost sight of in the thought of the drastic measures taken by Labour to accomplish its purpose. A limited strike would probably have attained the end for Labour without antagonizing the community, but the general community resented the idea that they should be made to suffer on account of a dispute with which they were in no way concerned. Large numbers looked upon the general Labour movement as an overt act of the tendency such as has been witnessed in Russia, and on this account and on account of the unnecessary suffering that was imposed upon them, most willingly entered into any movement to encounter the Strike or to provide for the carrying on of the life of the community while it lasted.

As is natural in such conditions, feeling at times ran high, and although the leaders counselled order and quietness on the part of the strikers, there were occasional outbreaks. These were perhaps less than might have been expected in the circumstances with the exception of two riots to which reference has to be made. It is of little value now to review the acts which produced hostility. It cannot be imagined that a community





would find all the services referred to suspended without deep resentment. This was aggravated by the speeches of leaders of all types, and by the fact that, for a time at least, the public Press was actually suspended. Certain interests who were advocating the strike published a Labour newspaper, though it was at times colored by sentiments which would be most likely to flow from the Socialistic group already mentioned. All classes were agitated, and the holding of outdoor meetings by those supporting the Strike was followed by parades. It is impossible to classify the elements which entered into these demonstrations. As has been said, there was in Winnipeg a receptive ground for seed of disturbance, and it brought forth the restless element that would be attracted by street demonstrations.

It might be said in this connection that the Civic Authorities had lost confidence in the City Police Force. The Union of the latter was affiliated with The Trades and Labour Council, and the Civic Authorities, or rather the Police Commission, desired to know that the Police Union would not be under the control of The Trades and Labor Council and be liable to be called out on Strike. The Police Commission, therefore, required an undertaking from the Policemen to the effect that their Union would not be affiliated with any general labor organization which might control their actions. The Policemen, generally, refused to concede this, and those refusing were dismissed and special constables were employed.

### THE RIOTS

Unfortunately, groups of turbulent persons united on the occasion of the 11th of June. Their object was to express resentment at the employment of special constables. The disturbance lasted over two hours. The event passed off with injury, in some cases serious, for a number of persons involved.

The military forces were augmented in large numbers from discharged soldiers and civilian volunteers. The Royal North-West Mounted Police were in readiness. A large special constable force was employed.

On the twentieth of June an open air meeting was held, and the assembly decided that on the following day they would hold a demonstration in the nature of a parade. This was in defiance of a proclamation by the Mayor. Warning against the proposed parade was given, but was not heeded. The gathering became disorderly; The Riot Act was read. The R.N.W.M.P. found it necessary to resort to fire arms in order to resist attack and disperse the mob. The result was that two of the mob were killed, but mob demonstration was thereupon terminated.

During the progress of the Strike certain Dominion and Provincial Cabinet Ministers, certain officers of the R.N.W.M.P., military officers and civic authorities conferred upon the situation and as to the necessary





protective measures to be taken. Persistent efforts were made by Senator Robertson, the Premier and Members of the Manitoba Government, the Mayor and certain Members of the City Government and Civic Officials to reach a settlement of the issues involved. No effort was spared in that direction, but no agreement was reached. There, however, came a time at which certain high placed officers of railway unions expressed their approval of certain terms as to Collective Bargaining, upon which the three Metal Masters particularly involved were agreed. These terms were published on the sixteenth June, and it was thought that the original basis of the Strike was thereby taken from the Strikers. From that time it seems that the feeling speedily grew that the conflict should cease. Labour lost the unanimity with which it entered the Strike, and the general desire to return to work was evident. That desire was put into actual effect in many cases. On the twenty-sixth day of June the Strike was formally called off by the Trades and Labour Council. The terms of Collective Bargaining so endorsed by the Railway Union Leaders referred to are appended thereto.

It seems, however, that these have never been formally accepted, and up to the time of hearing of evidence in this commission, at all events, they had not been made the subject of a written agreement between the parties involved. It is correct to say, however, that the method of bargaining thereby defined is an improvement upon the methods that were offered by the Metal Masters though not wholly what was desired by the Metal Workers Unions. The Unions have therefore gained to some slight extent, but the whole matter might have been worked out under The Industrial Conditions Act (Manitoba) without the enormous loss and development of bad feeling resulting from the Strike.

#### ALLEGED DISCRIMINATION

A considerable period of time was occupied in hearing representatives of Labour who charged discrimination in the employment of men who had gone out on strike. It was evidently thought that inquiry could be made into this. The letters patent did not provide for any such enquiry, but the undersigned thought that as coming under the head of effects of the Strike, there might be an opening for general evidence on this subject, so as to show what displacement of Labour took place. The various laymen who spoke for Labour at the hearings seemed to have the impression that a grievance lay in the fact that strikers had not been taken back and reinstated in their employment. The legal relation was ignored, as was also the right of an employer, subject to his contract, to employ exactly whom he pleases. The fact is that leaders in strike movements were not re-employed. This applies in civic services such as fire brigade and police force. Evidence was given that it also applied in certain railway services and quite likely elsewhere. The undersigned finds that employers



were confronted with various problems in this respect. On the one hand there was a general desire to employ all men out of work, whether strikers or not, but there were limits to the possibility of this. Business demand was not as good after the Strike as before, and there was not the demand for labour that there had been. Returned Soldiers had to be cared for, and employers naturally gave them the preference. In particular, cases were presented by Postal Employees, certain Railway Employees (of the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees) and members of the Police Service who had not been re-employed. The Postal Employees and Railway Employees regretted their action and representations were made in their behalf. The Police Force is under Government, partly Provincial and partly Civic. The case of the discharged members of the Police Force is a matter between the employer and employee. There was evidently some considerable misunderstanding and a want of mutual confidence in discussion. It would seem that all men who were good enough to be trusted with the office up to the time of their discharge at the time of the strike should be treated uniformly. The complaint of some of these was that they were under difficulties in obtaining other employment because deprived of unqualified good conduct certificates. It is understood there has been some adjustment of this.

#### COMMENT WITH A VIEW TO RECOMMENDATIONS

This report now returns to consideration of the alleged causes of the dissatisfaction. Mr. Winning described them as follows:

- 1—Unemployment.
- 2—The high cost of living and lack of the Government to give adequate relief.
- 3—Inadequate wages.
- 4—Profiteering.
- 5—The growing intelligence on the part of the working classes of economic inequalities in modern society.
- 6—Long hours of employment.
- 7—Undesirable working conditions.
- 8—The refusal on the part of the employers to recognize the right of collective bargaining.
- 9—The refusal on the part of some of the employers to recognize the right of the employee to organize Labour.

These were placed in above order by the undersigned for convenience of reference.

Items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 are general in character and concern economic conditions.



Items 6, 7 and 8 are matters that might well be adjusted under the Industrial Conditions Act (Manitoba) herein referred to.

Item 9—This must be left to progress of thought. There is such general recognition that it cannot be supposed to be a complaint common to all labour.

### UNEMPLOYMENT

The statement that unemployment was a cause of the strike hardly can be assigned as an immediate cause. When 24,000 employees go on strike and suspend practically all productive labour, it can hardly be said to be due to unemployment. Unemployment cannot be assigned as a cause of a strike. The two ideas are at opposites. What was meant no doubt was that the fear of unemployment kept Labour in uncertainty and fear, and, therefore, in a discontented state. The very suspension of Labour drove away from Winnipeg the demand for products which would have brought about a profitable period for Labour in Winnipeg. Labour in Winnipeg is suffering and likely to suffer still more from idleness which was a direct result of the strike. It is more likely that the cause of the strike is to be found under the other heads, namely, the high cost of living, inadequate wages (this is the same thing in other words as the high cost of living), profiteering (this likely means the demand of excessive profits on sale of necessities). The high cost of living is a general grievance. Consideration must be given to this subject. It is a complicated matter. High prices are not by any means due to extortion.

### HIGH COST OF FOOD PRODUCTS

But, as everyone knows, the one main cause of the great increase in prices since the beginning of the war was the tremendous demand made upon all food products and upon all clothing and wearing apparel, the enormous destruction thereof that took place, and the fact that so many millions of men were taken away from production into destructive employment. That is the one great fact to be considered, and we are probably fortunate in this country that the condition has not been actually worse than it has been and is at the present time. The extraordinary demand immediately forced prices upward, and the increased consumption and destruction brought about a shortage. The enormous demand during the war has not wholly abated. The foreign demand for all Canadian products, whether of native origin or results of manufacture of imported raw materials, is still very great, and has the inevitable effect of causing high prices at home. In short, the Canadian citizen has had to pay the price fixed by the foreign demand. It is to be borne in mind that this is not entirely an undesirable condition. It is absolutely necessary that Canada take advantage of the world's demand for her products. Canadian labour will not be employed unless that foreign demand is encouraged and favourably met. Canada's obligations require that it should be to the fullest



extent possible a producing and exporting country. The regrettable phase of this is that while Labour finds the cost of living enhanced by this foreign demand all Labour does not share in the fruits gleaned in Canada from this foreign demand. The Labour immediately concerned may do so, but still there are a large number of men who only find the present prosperity of Canada producing a burden upon them. It is not possible to expect reduction in the prices of necessities until we have such a great production over export that prices will go down. These prices will not go down until the foreign demand substantially decreases. Meanwhile the high cost of productive labour is only intensifying the difficulty. In a most important sense, therefore, it is desirable that the foreign demand be continued. When foreign countries produce for themselves again and the demand upon Canada for food and clothing ceases or abates, there will probably be a condition that will be quite as serious as the present. This does not solve, it only perpetuates the grievances to which Labour attributes its Strike last May, and the question is what can be done by way of relief for Labour under these circumstances. In the fields of Labour not immediately benefitted by the foreign demand there has not been a proportionate increase of wages and there is a great deal of Labour idle, and this is likely to continue and increase during the coming winter.

#### EXPENSIVE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM IN CANADA

The question forces itself as to whether something cannot be done to reduce the cost of necessities for that important part of the community now in mind. This brings us to the consideration of another phase of the high cost of necessities. A most expensive system of distribution exists here, and is responsible for a very great spread between the price obtained by the original producer and that paid by the ultimate consumer. The distribution system which has grown up in Canada is a very extravagant one. It would seem that surely some of the channels through which goods pass might be dispensed with. Between the original manufacturer or producer there may be the manufacturer's agents, the wholesaler and the retailer, all to make profit upon what is merely a method of distribution from the original manufacturer to the consumer. The expenses of business of these intermediaries are very heavy, and all being added to the price to be paid by the consumer make too heavy a cost to him. It would seem that a very great benefit could be rendered to the consumer class of low and moderate means if some practical plan of reducing distribution cost were put in operation. The reduction or wider spreading of overhead expenses would have a great tendency in that direction. This question has had to be solved before in other countries. The Co-operative Supply System in Great Britain affords instances. The undersigned points out that the details of the matter would be appropriate for consideration and recommendation by the Joint Council of Industry. Expressions of





desire for co-operative effort in this direction are frequently heard. It is observed that the farmer producer complains of the profits that are added to his produce before it reaches market, and expresses the wish that by Co-operative effort in town and country intervening agencies be considerably reduced.

### ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Mr. Winning states as one of the causes of the discontent which brought about the Strike, the growing intelligence on the part of the working class of economic inequalities in modern society. This may mean that Labour does not get its due compensation out of the results of its efforts.

This may also have the wider interpretation of a deplorable class distinction. The question of proportion of reward might well be treated by adjustment methods. But the grievance of class distinction is deeply rooted. Only a radical change of attitude on all sides can overcome that. Such a radical change is necessary to reach a stable and satisfied condition. Labour has seen manufacturers and the merchandising class prosperous during the war, and in too many cases self indulgent, whereas the condition of the very labour essential to the prosperity, instead of improving, grew worse. To Labour the picture presented is this:

The other elements of the community never seem to be in want, neither in the matter of food, clothing, suitable residence, education, medical and other professional attention, or even recreation, yet Labour is not only never assured but is very often deprived of the essentials of these things. The matter could be elaborated in detail. Winnipeg unfortunately presents a prominent example of these extremes. There has been, and there is now, an increasing display of carefree, idle luxury and extravagance on the one hand, while on the other is intensified deprivation. The generally cold indifference of the one section to the condition of the other and the display of luxury aggravate this feeling of social disparity into one of active antagonism by the one class against the other.

It must be apparent to all that a system of capital and labour should continue to exist. There must be something to provide the necessary incentive to effort or progress will cease. It would be as bad for Labour as for Capital if the incentive to capital to press forward were withdrawn, but it is the office of Government to see that these two important factors maintain proper regard for each other. If Capital does not provide enough to assure Labour a contented existence with a full enjoyment of the opportunities of the times for human improvement, then the Government might find it necessary to step in and let the state do these things at the expense of Capital.



### EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGES

The disparity to which Mr. Winning referred finds expression also in the matter of Education. Unquestionably there is as great an average of intellectual capacity among one group of men as the other, probably keener in one class than the other because of necessity. The avenues of higher Education are practically closed to children of those engaged in manual labour. There has recently developed in Britain the idea of providing subsistence and means for promising youth of the wage-earning class to enable them to continue on into the Universities. Provision is made to replace the lost earnings in the home during the period. In this and in other respects, it is of prime importance that the state care for the human asset.

### UNEMPLOYMENT

While the foregoing is of immediate importance and far-reaching in its effect, it must be remembered that before the community at the present time is the question of probable unemployment. This may be due to dismissal due to the loss of engagement by men who went on strike, or to the fact that, owing to the Strike, business became so reduced that labour demand is less and therefore unemployment exists. There is a further fact that the labouring population has been largely increased by the return of men who went as soldiers. The undersigned does not think that in the conditions and circumstances the matter of present unemployment of men who went out on strike should be treated with indifference or that these men and their families should be made to suffer out of any punitive idea that the want of employment was their own fault. That would be a narrow way of treating the matter. The state of unemployment should be treated as the result of a condition and not as the result of a disobedient state of mind. There may be differences of opinion upon that, but there can be no doubt about it, if it is put on the ground that the welfare of the province requires that provision be made to sustain any who will otherwise suffer hardship during the approaching winter. The discontented state of mind will only become aggravated, but what is more important, the human suffering and loss which may otherwise arise from the want of proper sustenance is such that expenditure to avoid it will be not only human but profitable.

### MEDICAL SERVICE

Another contribution to the conservation of the human asset and to the contentment of the people involved is brought out by the disclosure during the hearings of the Commission of the impossibility at times of manual labourers to secure for their wives and families medical assistance and the necessary provision of medicines. It is not to be thought for a moment that there was any forgetfulness of the great amount of devoted and gratuitous work which the medical profession renders to the community



in question, neither can there be for a moment overlooked the philanthropic services of, and sacrifice of individuals and of organizations of men and women in Winnipeg, who in various ways spontaneously provide for many of the wants of that community, but in this connection, as also in the matter of unemployment, there comes up the fact that Labour looks upon charitable relief, no matter how tactfully bestowed, as nevertheless charity, and has a feeling of discomfort thereat. This is very much pronounced in some cases, and tends to set class against class probably as much as any other circumstance. Labour takes the view that as a fundamental part of the producing force of the country it should never suffer a want that is not shared by the element that benefits from its labour, and if a time of hardship arises, means should be taken to see that there is such an application of wealth that Labour will in an honourable way, and as a right and not by grace have the means to tide itself over until normal periods return. In addition to the provision for subsistence in the period of distress that is likely to arise this winter, the undersigned recommends the consideration of means to provide medical services and medicinal necessities in the communities referred to.

The undersigned does not consider that the adoption of alleviating measures will produce a condition of idleness. On the contrary it is believed that some practical recognition of these necessities of Labour will remove grievances and produce a healthier condition of mind and a greater desire to enter into production and to advance the welfare of the state.

Of all things that are necessary today, one is that conditions may be so created that Labour will earnestly and cheerfully enter into the task of greater production in Canada. The state of mind has a very great deal to do with this. Education into the economic necessities of the Dominion and due recognition of Labour's rights and needs will produce a willingness that will make the efficiency of Labour reach a degree probably unknown at present.

The undersigned respectfully submits that it is only by application in concrete form of the good intentions of Government and of the employer that Labour will develop a contented spirit. Volumes are written, and there are conferences innumerable, with the object of removing what are called Labour troubles. Unless these are followed by immediate application of something that Labour can see and realize, and that has its immediate and direct benefit upon the individual at his work and in his home they will be fruitless.

There should be no difficulty in deriving the means for the carrying out of the specific objects above mentioned. It is submitted that there should be a scheme of taxation of those who can afford it and application of wealth to the reasonable needs of the others in the community whose lot in life has not been favored.



### PRESENT DISCONTENT

The undersigned finds that to a great mass of steady Labour the strike was at its commencement, or very soon afterward, a regrettable occurrence, but they found themselves unable to retrace their steps. There is still grave dissatisfaction. It is necessary that steady Labour should see that it has the consideration from the Government and other elements of the population, and that such consideration takes practical form. Otherwise it is not likely to remain silent.

### BRITISH SUBJECTS

It is from the highest public standpoint essential that those among the labouring classes who are subjects by birth should receive every recognition and encouragement, and that they should be assured of opportunity equal to and in fact greater than is enjoyed by those of other lands.

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### RECOMMENDATION REGARDING THE INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS ACT OF MANITOBA

The Industrial Conditions Act (Manitoba) was assented to on March 14th, 1919, and was proclaimed on March 29th, 1919. The Provincial Government requested both employer and employee organizations to name suitable persons to be appointed to the Joint Council of Industry, provided by the Act. The employers submitted such names, but the Trades and Labour Council, on behalf of the employees, refused to submit names as requested or to co-operate in the application of the Act.

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Had the Act been in operation and the Joint Council of Industry been established thereunder, the specific labour disputes which existed in May last would have been published, investigated, and no doubt, adjusted by arbitrament. Not only so but the Act provides means for ventilation of all the other general grievances of Labour herein referred to. The publicity thereby ensured would doubtless go far to remove wrongs. The recommendations of the Council thereon could not well be ignored by any authority or by any organization, whether of employer or employed.

The Council is to consist of five persons, one to be impartial so far as employer and employee is concerned, to be Chairman, and two to be selected as representatives of employees and two of employers. The Act specifically declares that the Board may hold investigation into all matters relating to industrial disputes and make report thereon; it may make investigations into the cost of living to employees and report thereon; it may enquire into the numbers of persons employed in industries, the rates of wages paid, and generally all matters pertaining to the demand for labour and the relations of the employees, whether organized or not, to



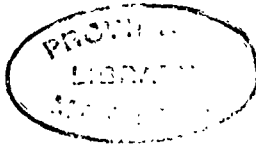


employers. The council may investigate conditions of employment, housing conditions, home conditions of women and children, sanitary conditions, educational facilities and the use made thereof, apprenticeship, opportunities for recreation and possibility of provision by employees for the future. There are also other general and beneficial provisions. The Act does not attempt to prohibit strikes, but provides for certain influence in this direction by means of Schedule "A," containing rules of law which would have a material effect in leading the parties concerned to observe the decisions of the Board rather than on the one hand to permit Strikes to take place, or, on the other hand, to engage in Strikes. The Act does not apply to those engaged in Agricultural pursuits or in Railways operated under the Railway Act of Canada.

The undersigned considers that it is highly in the public interest that this Act be brought into operation immediately and that the interests concerned co-operate therein. It is unquestionable that Labour cannot be prejudiced but will be greatly benefitted by the operations of a Joint Industrial Council such as is contemplated by the Act. The manifold scope of its inquiries as above described brought into play immediately would be most advantageous.

Nov. 6th, 1919.

H. A. ROBSON.



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MANITOBA ROYAL COMMISSION TO  
ENQUIRE INTO AND REPORT UPON THE  
CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF THE GENERAL  
40011983 GOV PUB



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DATE DUE SLIP

NOV 05 RETURN	NOV 27 RETURN
DUE DATE	APR 01 1995
APR 02 RETURN	APR 08 '98
FEB 18 RETURN	
MAR 09 RETURN	
NOV 09 RETURN	
NOV 19 RETURN	
DEC 02 RETURN	
MAR 09 1994	
MAR 23 '94	
APR 03 RETURN	

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